



The President's Daily Brief

20 November 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Monday's private meeting in Paris shows that Hanoi still regards bilateral discussions with the US as the way to get the talks moving. (Page 1)

On Page 3 we summarize the positions taken by the Soviet delegation in yesterday's SALT talks.

Egon Bahr has provided a report of his latest meeting with Soviet officials in West Berlin. (Page 4)

On Page 5 [redacted] Latin America [redacted]
Chile [redacted]

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Egypt [redacted]
[redacted] (Page 6)

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Saigon's cabinet has vetoed recent trade agreements with Cambodia. (Page 7)

We report on the current military situation in northern Laos on Page 8, and on Page 9 note the increasing activity of Chinese Communist antiaircraft units against US aircraft in the roadbuilding area.

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The Soviet submarine tender left Cienfuegos yesterday. (Page 9)

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VIETNAM

The one thing that emerges clearly from the private meeting in Paris on 16 November is that Hanoi still views bilateral discussions with the US as the way to get the talks off dead center. This was apparent when Xuan Thuy, in response to Ambassador Bruce's statement that the US will not negotiate the political future of South Vietnam without the full participation of the Saigon government, asked whether Bruce could "discuss anything about political problems." The North Vietnamese are likely to hold to this view, at least until they get a better reading of US/GVN terms for a political settlement. If they see any room for negotiations on terms they might find acceptable, we would expect them to bear down even harder on specific issues, as Xuan Thuy did when he asked for US views on how general elections should be organized in South Vietnam.

In our view, such issues, and not the Communists' insistence on changes in the leadership in Saigon, are at the heart of Hanoi's intransigence in Paris. Although there is no doubt about the seriousness of their demand for the ouster of Thieu and Ky or of their long-term goal of achieving full political power in South Vietnam, their basic demand regarding a negotiated political settlement is that there be a new government in the South in which they have a share of power. Therefore, there is at least a possibility that Hanoi's refusal to deal with the present government is a tactic and not a bedrock policy position.

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Of interest in this connection is a recent broadcast by the Viet Cong's Liberation Radio, which touched on some of the troubles Communists and Communist sympathizers in South Vietnam might have following a cease-fire if American forces were still on the scene and the present government were still in power. The most arresting passage in the broadcast concerned what would happen if, in such circumstances, "our people should temporarily recognize the Thieu-Ky-Khiem administration as a legal administration." A number of specific questions posed were similar to those we might expect the Communists to surface somewhere down the line in the event of any serious negotiations.

The broadcast also recalled how anti-Communist campaigns were launched by the Diem regime after the 1954 Geneva Agreements, asserting that "resistance fighters could expect even worse treatment if they would lay down their arms under present circumstances." It called on President Nixon to provide some "appropriate answers" to these questions. Allegedly a commentary on President Nixon's five-point peace plan, this broadcast could merely be trying to make a more persuasive case against the President's proposals and to undercut the appeal they may have in South Vietnam. Even so, it leaves the impression that acceptable answers to these questions might have an impact on Communist attitudes toward a settlement and even on Communist willingness to deal with the Thieu government.

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SALT

Soviet delegation chief Semenov devoted yesterday's meeting to a discussion of verification, advancing for the most part positions that coincide with the US proposal of 4 August. Endorsing reliance on "national means" of verification, he agreed to several supplementary features that Washington had already suggested. These include an agreement to exchange--on a voluntary basis--information relating to the fulfillment of mutual obligations, and undertaking not to hinder national means of verification, either by interfering with their operation or by employing special means of concealment. He also accepted the creation of a standing consultative commission to examine future questions concerning compliance with and modification of the agreement.

Not all was sweetness and light, however. Semenov did not mention, for example, "selective direct observation," a concept the US had proposed as a possible verification measure. (After the meeting, Soviet delegate Grinevsky stated that the USSR was not prepared to consider such a measure.) Moreover, Semenov continued to insist that mobile ICBMs not be banned as the US proposes. He labeled "artificial" the US argument that if these were permitted, national means could not verify that allowed weapons totals were being honored. In addition, during private conversations the Soviets continued to insist that US forward-based systems be discussed at SALT.

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WEST GERMANY - USSR

In the latest of Egon Bahr's meetings with Soviet officials in West Berlin on 13 November, the Soviets urged Bonn to abandon its position that it would ratify the West German - Soviet treaty only after a satisfactory Berlin agreement is reached. On the question of resuming East - West German talks, Bahr claimed that he had some impact in arguing that the Germans can negotiate arrangements on access to Berlin only under a four-power agreement, and that any results must be covered by a four-power understanding.

This is Bahr's first direct report to the Allies of his conversations

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and he did not mention his earlier meetings. The series started in early June after the draft West German - Soviet treaty had run into heavy flak in Bonn, and may initially have concerned revisions the West Germans wanted before signing it.

After Bahr conducted intensive talks in mid-October, the West Germans proposed to the Allies a form of Berlin agreement that in some ways resembled the Soviet position, and the East Germans offered to negotiate access directly.

The Russians likely judge their contacts with Bahr as having already been useful in their effort to shift the focus of talks on Berlin to an East - West German forum. Presumably, Moscow's satisfaction at Bonn's response to the East German initiative on 29 October weighs heavily in Soviet attempts to avoid any substantive concession at the four-power talks. The Soviets doubtless feel that inter-German talks on Berlin are more likely to create the kind of pressures on the Allies that could lead to some kind of agreement favorable to Soviet interests.

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LATIN AMERICA

In the wake of Chile's resumption of diplomatic relations with Havana last week, Uruguayan Foreign Minister Peirano Facio is worried that other Latin American countries may also recognize Cuba unless an OAS majority reaffirms the 1964 resolution that resulted in the isolation of Cuba by member states. He expressed the opinion that Chile's action threatens the "credibility of all inter-American obligations." Colombian Foreign Minister Velasquez has also suggested that the OAS review its resolution.

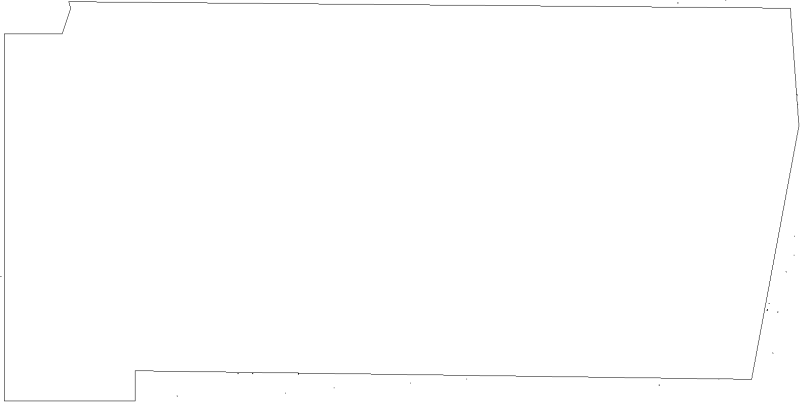
Mexican Foreign Minister Carrillo Flores, on the other hand, is pleased with Chile's move, and has implied that his country would vote to seat Cuba in the OAS if the matter comes up. Mexico is the only country that refused to comply with the 1964 resolution.

Unless Havana publicly renounces its role as an "exporter of revolution," a majority of OAS members would uphold the 1964 resolution if it ever came to a vote. A number of countries, however, prefer to avoid a public re-examination of Cuba's revolutionary role, fearing it would aggravate divisions within the organization.

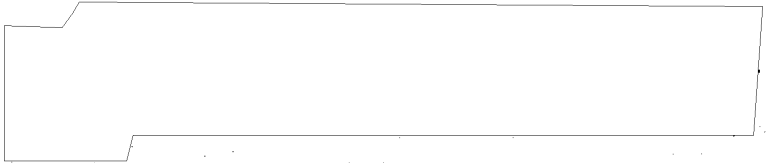
Cuba has indicated a willingness to consider bilateral relations with those countries that publicly disavow the OAS sanctions, but has vehemently rejected resumption of participation in the OAS as long as the US retains membership.

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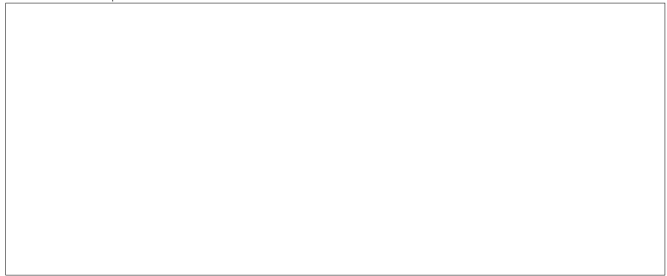
EGYPT



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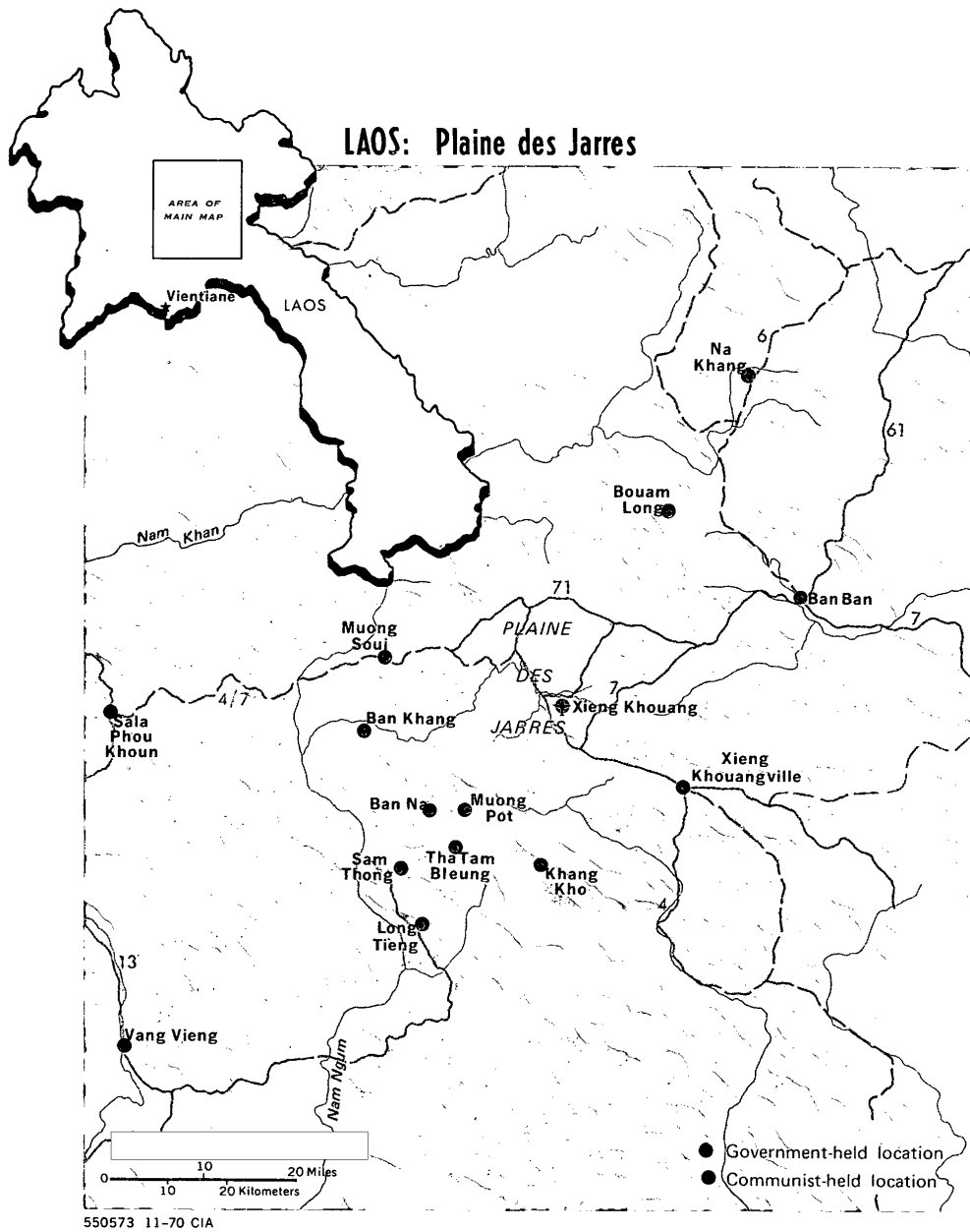
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VIETNAM-CAMBODIA

The South Vietnamese cabinet has withheld approval of trade agreements reached in recent talks with Cambodia because the negotiators had failed to adopt an acceptable piaster-riel exchange rate. It approved agreements on other matters, such as land routes and the delineation of the border for customs purposes.

Saigon's hard-nosed economic bargaining will not sit well with the Cambodians, some of whom are already hypercritical of their South Vietnamese allies. However, another effort probably will be made to find a compromise solution to the tougher issues if the two countries proceed with a previously planned, but still unscheduled, second round of talks.

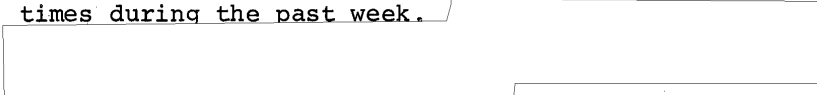


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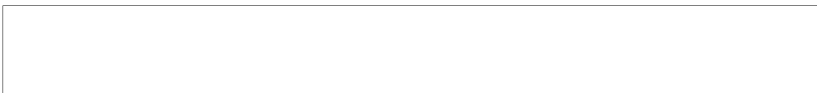
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LAOS

Elements of the North Vietnamese 148th Regiment have abandoned an important hilltop position two miles north of Ban Na that has changed hands several times during the past week.



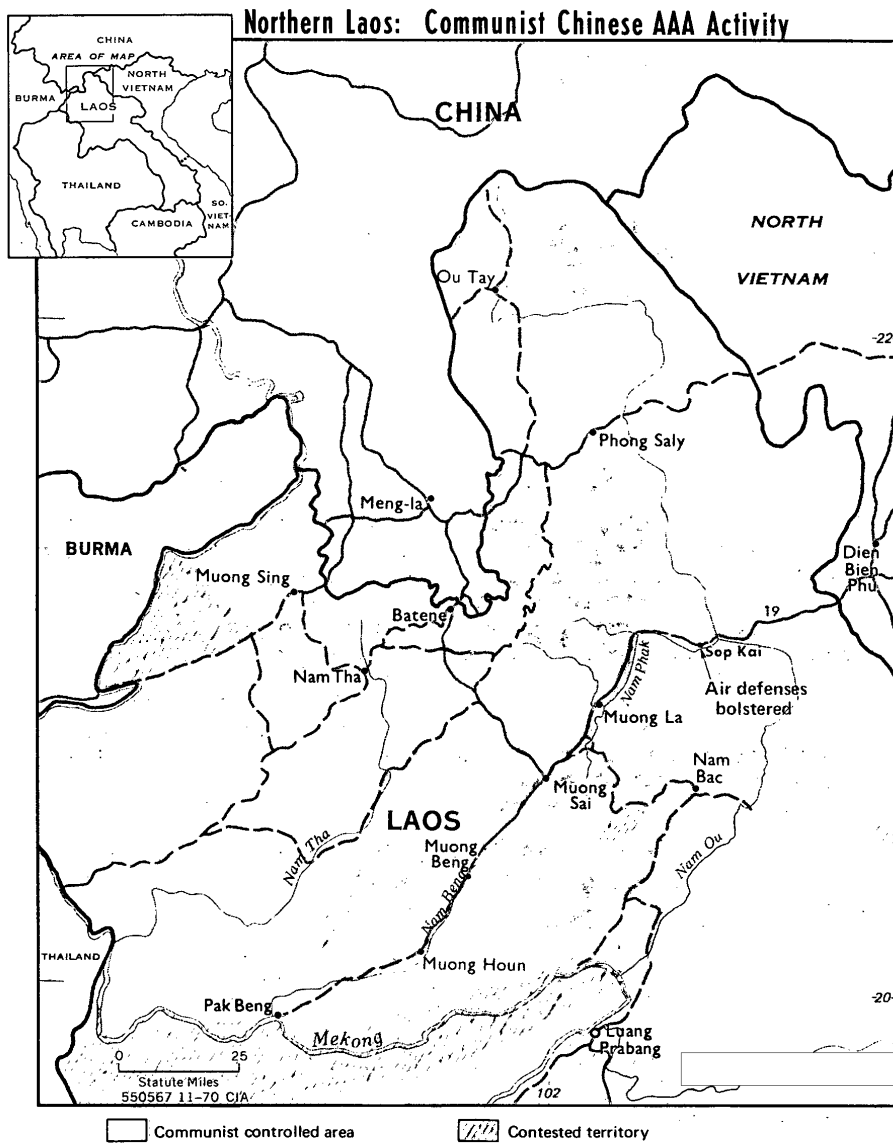
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At Muong Soui, the action has been characterized by light skirmishing and occasional mortar and rocket attacks. On 17 November the neutralist garrison of about 1,200 there was reinforced with two 75-mm. guns.

The North Vietnamese have become concerned that Vientiane may be about to launch a major offensive of its own in the near future. One intercept reported that five government battalions from the Long Tieng area would be used to attack enemy supply lines in the vicinity of Xieng Khouang.



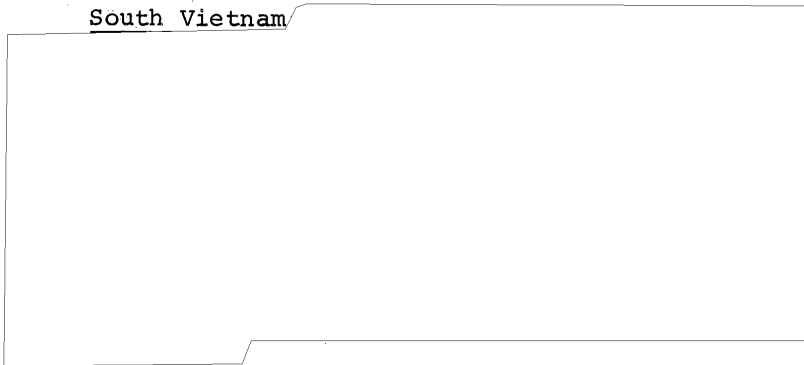
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NOTES

Communist China - Laos: Chinese Communist anti-aircraft units in northern Laos have been increasingly active against US aircraft in the last few months as Chinese road construction has pushed into an area of US air operations. Construction north-eastward from Muong Sai has reached Route 19 in the Sop Kai area, and intercepts say that Chinese units east of Sop Kai are suffering casualties from air strikes. The Chinese are augmenting their anti-aircraft units in the area. At the other end of the road to the southwest, there has been no extension of the road south of Muong Houn.

South Vietnam



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USSR-Cuba: The Soviet submarine tender that arrived in Cuba in early September left Cienfuegos at noon yesterday and is heading to the east. A rescue tug, which had accompanied the tender in its cruise around Cuba last month, remained in port.

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